



THE  
CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. T O W N,  
CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

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NUMBER XCVIII.

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THURSDAY, December 11, 1755.

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*Ut id ostenderem, quòd te isti facilem putant,  
Id non fieri ex verâ vitâ, neque adeò ex æquo et bono,  
Sed ex assentando, indulgendo, et largiendo. — TER.*

To Mr. T O W N.

SIR!



HAVE been some years married to one of the best women in the world. She possesses all the virtues that can be named: but alas! she possesses some of them to excess. Those which I wish to particularize, and which are infinitely pernicious to me, and my fortunes, are her superabundant Good-nature, and her boundless Generosity.

It is a little difficult perhaps to ascertain what are, or ought to be, the exact bounds of Good-nature; which, of all virtues, seems to me most necessary to be confined, or at least mitigated in such a manner, as to hinder it from de-

VOL. II.

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of your absence; or if your family is out, they will break-fast, dine, and sup with you out of charity, because you should not be alone. Every house is haunted with these disturbers of our meals: and perhaps the best way to get rid of them, would be to put them, with the rest of your servants, upon board-wages.

BUT besides these dangles after men of fortune, and intruders on your table in town, the country breeds a race of lowly retainers, which may properly be ranked among the same species. Almost every family supports a poor kinsman, who happening to be no way related to the estate, was too proud of his blood to apply himself in his youth to any profession, and rather chose to be supported in laziness at the family-seat. They are, indeed, known perhaps to be cousins to the squire, but do not appear in a more creditable light than his servants out of livery; and sometimes actually submit to as mean offices of drudgery as the groom or whipper-in. The whole fraternity of *Hangers-on*, whether in town or country, or under whatever denomination, are the sons of idleness: for it will be found upon examination, that whenever a man, whose bread depends on his industry, gives himself up to indolence, he becomes capable of any meanness whatever: and if *they cannot dig*, yet like our *Hangers-on*, *to beg they are not ashamed*.

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VOL. II.

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stroying its own excellence and utility. On the one hand, if it is restrained too close, the world will say, that it must entirely lose its essence: But fatal experience has convinced me, that if it is permitted to enjoy a full unlimited sway, this amiable virtue becomes a ridiculous vice; and brings with it, as in my wife's case, fruitless expences, ill-judged concessions, and a kind of blind folly, that is always liable to contempt.

GENEROSITY is the daughter of Good-nature. She is very fair and lovely when under the tuition of Judgment and Reason; but when she escapes from her tutors, and acts indiscriminately, according as her fancy allures her, she subjects herself, like her mother, to the blasts of sneer, ridicule, and disdain.

To illustrate these assertions by some examples, from among the many mishaps, losses, and embarrassments, which have accrued to us in the course of our domestic affairs, give me leave to tell you, that some years ago, we had a footboy who acted as butler, and had the custody of all the little plate which our small fortune could afford us. The fellow was awkward, and unfit for the station; but my wife very good-naturedly was determined to keep him in our service, because he intended to marry the nursery-maid, and would undoubtedly make an excellent husband. The rascal was a thief; but as it is ill-natured to suspect people, before we have full proof of their knavery, several of his tricks, and petty larcenies, were attributed to the itinerant Jews and higlers (we then living at *Newington*) who frequently called at our door. Flushed with success, and relying on my wife's credulity and Good-nature, he began to form deeper designs; and (as he lay in the kitchen) pretended to have seen a man breaking in at the window, and to have hid himself with a chopping knife in his hand, so as to have felled the villain to the ground as soon as he had put his body through the casement.

ment. A noise from without was said to have given an alarm to the housebreaker, and to have interrupted him in his attempt; but some whole panes of glass being dislocated from their lead, and some hacks and scratches of a chisel (marks all made by our own servant) being visible next morning, my wife very generously rewarded her *Jemmy*, whom she jocularly called *Scrub*, for his diligence and courage in defending us from having our throats cut. This terrible tale was doubtless formed in order to remove all suspicions, when he should pillage the house himself; but precautions being taken by us, in consequence of this alarm, to fortify our bed-chamber, where he knew our current treasure was repositied, *Jemmy* thought it time to decamp; so that in about a week after he had received the reward, I hinted at, of a crown piece from his lady, he stole her gold repeating watch, and a pair of our best silver candlesticks, with which he voluntarily transported himself, as we have been since told, to the *West-Indies*, leaving his mistress the nursery-maid, big with child, and thereby giving great licence to the neighbourhood to animadvert upon my wife's amazing prescience in foreseeing his excellencies as an husband.

You must further be told, Sir, that my dear consort, in the full glow of her goodness, is never contented unless her servants marry each other. All I can urge against so impolitic a custom has been to no purpose: Marriage (she says) prevents vice, and saves souls from destruction. Perhaps it may; but are no unmarried servants to be found in Mr. *Fielding's* Register Office, or elsewhere, but what are vicious? At least I am sure, that this piece of sanctity is very expensive in its effects, and is attended with many inconveniences. One of her maids about two years ago was discovered to be very intimate with my footman; my wife, to prevent ill consequences, hastened to have them married, and was present herself at the ceremony. She admired the modesty of the woman and the decent gravity of the man during  
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the holy rites, and she was entirely convinced that no harm could have happened from so decent a couple. In little more than three months after the marriage, *Patty* brought forth a swinging girl; but as it was born almost six months before its time, my wife advised them to keep it the remaining half year in cotton. She did this purely from a motive of good-nature, to try to shield the new married woman's reputation; but finding our neighbours flee at the incident, and smile contemptuously at the prescription of cotton, she contented herself in believing *Patty's* own account, that "in truth she had been married eight months before by a *Fleet-parson*, but was afraid to own it."

BUT if my wife's indulging her domestics in matrimony was productive of no other ill consequence than merely their being married, it might indeed sometimes rather prove a benefit than a detriment: but the chaster and more sober they have been before marriage, the greater number of children are produced in matrimony; and my wife looks upon herself as in duty obliged to take care of the poor helpless offspring, that have been begotten under her own roof; so that I assure you, Sir, my house is so well filled with children, that it would put you immediately in mind of the *Foundling Hospital*; with this difference however, that in *my Hospital* not only the children are provided for, whether bastards or legitimate, but also the fathers and mothers.

YOUR high office, Mr. CENSOR, requires and leads you to hear domestic occurrences, otherwise I should scarce have troubled you with the records of a private family, almost ruined by excrescencies of virtue. The same overflowing humanity runs through the whole conduct of the dear woman whom I have mentioned. Even in trifles she is full of works of supererogation. Our doors are perpetually surrounded with beggars, where the halt, the maimed and the blind assemble in as great numbers, as at the door of the

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*Roman Catholic Chapel in Lincoln's Inn-Fields.* She not only gives them money, but sends them out great quantities of bread, beer, and cold victuals ; and she has her different *pensioners* (as she herself calls them) for every day in the week. But the expence attending these out-door petitioners (many of whom have from time to time been discovered to be impostors) is nothing in comparison to the sums that are almost daily drawn from her by begging letters. It is impossible to imagine a calamity, by which she has not been a sufferer, in relieving those who have extorted money from her, by pretended misfortunes. The poor lady has been much hurt by losses in trade, has been a great sufferer by fire, undergone many hardships from sickness and other unforeseen accidents, and it was but yesterday that she paid a long apothecary's bill brought on by a violent fever. Thus, Sir, though my wife goes into but little company, and the family-expences are to all appearance very small, yet my wife's superabundant Good-nature is such perpetual drawback on her œconomy, that we run out considerably. This extravagant and ill-judged Generosity renders all her numerous excellencies of none effect : and I have often known her almost destitute of cloaths, because she had distributed her whole wardrobe among lyars, sycophants, and hypocrites.

Thus, Sir, as briefly as I can I have set before you my unhappy case. I am perishing by degrees, not by any real extravagance, any designed ruin, or any indulgence of luxury and riot in the person who destroys me. On the contrary, no woman can exceed my wife in the simplicity of her dress, the humility of her desires, or the contented easiness of her nature. What name, Sir, shall I give to my misfortunes ? They proceed not from vice, nor even from folly : they proceed from too tender a heart ; a heart that hurries away, or absorbs all judgment and reflection. To call these errors the fruits of Good-nature is too mild a definition :

Vol. II.

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and yet to give them an harsher appellation, is unkind. Let me suffer what I will, I must kiss the dear hand that ruins me.

IN my tender hours of speculation I would willingly impute my wife's faults to our climate, and the natural disposition of our natives. When the *English* are Good-natured, they are generally so to excess: and as I have not seen this particular character delineated in any of your papers, I have endeavoured to paint it myself: and shall draw to the conclusion of my letter by one piece of advice, *Not to be GENEROUS overmuch*. The highest acts of Generosity are seldom repaid in any other coin, but baseness and ingratitude: and we ought ever to remember, that out of ten lepers cleaned, one only came back to return thanks; the rest were made whole, and went their way.

*I am, Sir, your most humble servant,*

TIMON of LONDON.

\* \* \* *A Letter directed for G. K. is left at the Publisher's.*

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